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REVOLUTIONARY STORY.

"Good mother, what quaint legend are you reading,
In that old-fashioned book?
Beside your door I've been this half hour pleading
All vainly for one look.

"About your chair the little birds fly bolder
Than in the woods they fly,
With heads dropt slantwise, as if o'er your shoulder
They read as they went by;

"Each with his glossy collar ruffling double
Around his neck so slim,
Even as with that atmosphere of trouble,
Through which our blessings swim.

"Is it that years throw on us chillier shadows,
The longer time they run,
That, with your sad face fronting yonder meadows,
You creep into the sun?

"I'll sit upon the ground and hear your story."
Sadly she shook her head,
And pushing back the thin white veil of glory
'Twixt her and heaven, she said.

"Ah! wondering child, I knew not of your pleading—
My thoughts were chained, indeed,
Upon my book, and yet what you call reading
I have no skill to read.

"There was a time once when I had a lover;
Why look you in such doubt?
True, I am old now—ninety years and over"—
A crumpled flower fell out

From 'twixt the book-leaves. "Seventy years they've
pressed it:

'Twas like a living flame,
When he that plucked it, by the plucking blessed it:"
I knew the smile that came,

And flickered on her lips in wannish splendor,
Was lighted at that flower,
For even yet its radiance, faint and tender,
Reached to its primal hour.

"God bless you! seventy years since it was gathered?"

"Ay, I remember well;"
And in her old hand, palsy-struck, and withered,
She held it up to smell.

"And is it true, as poets say, good mother,
That love can never die?
And that for all it gives unto another
It grows the richer?" "Aye,

"The homely brier from spring till summer closes,
All the great world around,
Hangs by its thorny arms to keep its roses
From off the low, black ground;

"And love is like it—sufferings but try it,
Death but evokes the might
That, all too mighty to be thwarted by it,
Breaks through into the light."

"Then frosty age may wrap about its bosom
The light of fires long dead?"
Kissing the piece of dust she called a blossom,
She shut the book, and said:

"You see yon ash-tree with its thick leaves, blowing
The blue side out? (Great Power,
Keep its head green!) My sweetheart, in the mowing,
Beneath it found my flower.

"A mile off all that day the shots were flying,
And mothers, from the door,
Looked for the sons, who, on their faces lying,
Would come home never more.

Across the battle-field the dogs were whining;
I saw, from where I stood,
Horses with quivering flanks, and strained eyes,
shining
Like thin skins full of blood.

"Brave fellows we had then: there was my neighbor—
The British lines he saw;
Took his old scythe and ground it to a sabre,
And mowed them down like straw!

"And there were women, then, of giant spirit—
Nay, though the blushes start,
The garments their degenerate race inherit,
Hang loose about the heart.

"Where was I, child? how is my story going?"
"Why, where by yonder tree
With leaves so rough your sweetheart, in the mowing,
Gathered your flower!" "Ah me!

"My poor lad dreamed not of the red-coat devil
That just for pastime drew
To his bright epaulet, his musket level,
And shot him half in two!

"Beside him I was kneeling the next minute—
From the red grass he took
The shattered hand up, and the flower was in it
You saw within my book."

"He died." "Then you have seen some stormy weather?"

"Ay, more of foul than fair;
And all the snows we should have shared together,
Have fallen on my hair."

"And has your life been worth the living, mother,
With all its sorrows?" "Aye,
I'd live it o'er again, were there no other,
For this one memory."

I answered soft—I felt the place was holy—
One maxim stands approved:
"They know the best of life, however lowly,
Who ever have been loved."

